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Impact of Ranked-Choice Voting on Incumbents

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I. Introduction

Ranked-Choice Voting

- Ranked-Choice voting is used in Minneapolis, San Francisco, Oakland, and has been approved for use in the State of Maine.
- Previous research has looked at how various electoral systems influence election results, but not if incumbents are helped.
- We look at whether or not incumbents in Minneapolis' 2013 elections were afforded any sort of protection due to ranked-choice voting.
- We expect to see incumbents receive a higher percentage of second and third ranked votes on each ballot, if not receiving the first place vote.



II. Hypothesis & Methods

Hypothesis: Incumbents will see greater protection in Ranked Choice elections than traditional elections.

Data is taken from Minneapolis' 2013 official elections results.

- Used ballot data from each voter in Minneapolis to look for patterns.
- Totaled up the number of first, second, and third

ranked votes each candidate received.

- Looked to see where each candidate's second and third ranked votes went, expecting to see the incumbent candidate receive many of those.

2013 Minneapolis Results

2013 Minneapolis Municipal Elections				
Ward	Incumbent Won	Incumbent Lost	Open Race	Multiple Rounds
Mayor			X	X
1	X			
2	X			
3		X		
4	X			
5			X	X
6		X		
7	X			
8	X			
9			X	X
10		X		
11	X			
12			X	
13			X	X
Total	6	3	5	4

III. Results

- We expected to see evidence of incumbent protection in Minneapolis, but our results show the opposite.
- The only races where multiple rounds were needed, were for open seats.
- Nine incumbents sought reelection, meaning five races were open.
- Three of the nine incumbents lost the election

IV. Conclusions

Ranked-Choice voting has seen a growth in American usage

incumbents in instant-runoff elections, but we actually found the opposite. Three of the nine incumbents seeking reelection lost their races.

- Incumbents have been shown to be at an advantage in all elections.
- We entered the project, expecting to see an additional protection for
- Future research is still needed to look at other ranked-choice elections

